

Message Text

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64

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R 12

115Z JAN 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE 9260

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 0579

NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINT, CH

SUBJECT: TENG HSIAO-PING/S ELEVATION TO POLITBURO

REF: PEKING 76

SUMMARY. TENG HSIAO-PING'S ELEVATION TO THE POLITBURO SUGGESTS THAT HE HAS BEEN ASSIGNED A TOP STATE POST, A DECISION PROBABLY MADE IN PREPARATION FOR THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS. THERE MAY BE A CONNECTION BETWEEN TENG'S RISE AND THE REDUCTION OF MILITARY'S POLITICAL ROLE. END SUMMARY.

1. TENG HSIAO-PING'S ELEVATION TO THE POLITBURO IS CONFIRMED BY REFTTEL AND WE AGREE WITH USLO THAT REPORTS OF HIS BEING NAMED TO THE MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMISSION, AND SPECULATION THAT HE IS TO BE A MEMBER OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE POLITBURO, ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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PLAUSIBLE. THE RUMOR THAT HE WILL BECOME MINISTER OF DEFENSE DOES AWAIT FURTHER EVIDENCE, BUT THERE IS A LOGIC IN THE SITUATION FOR BELIEVING THAT HE MAY TAKE UP SOME LEADERSHIP DUTIES AFFECTING THE MILITARY. THE TIMING OF TENG'S ELEVATION FOLLOWS CLOSELY THE SHIFT OF MILITARY COMMANDERS, INCLUDING LI TEH-SHENG WHO HAD LOOKED LIKE A TOP CONTENDER FOR THE DEFENSE POST. IF LI SETTLES DOWN IN SHENYANG--AND THAT IS WHERE HE SEEMS TO BE AT PRESENT--THEN HIS POST AS CHIEF POLITICAL COMMISSAR OF THE PLA MAY ALSO OPEN UP.

2. IT IS LIKELY THAT TENG'S MOVE INTO THE POLITBURO RELATES TO PREPARATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS AND A DECISION TO GIVE TENG A TOP STATE POST WHICH IN TURN JUSTIFIED POLITUBRO STATUS FOR HIM. WHEN REPORTS OF TENG'S INPENDING REHABILITATION BEGAN TO CIRCULATE TWO YEARS AGO IT WAS SAID THAT HIS SERVICES AS A QUALIFIED TOP CADRE WERE NEEDED. AT THE TIME TENG SURFACED IN APRIL LAST YEAN WE SPECULATED THAT SOME SHIFT OF POWER HAD OCCURRED (1973 HONG KONG 1235), AND THIS MAY NOW BE WORKING OUT IN CONNECTION WITH THE REDUCTION OF THE MILITARY'S ROLE.

3. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TENG'S NEW ASSIGNMENT IS, OR HOW LONG HE HAS BEEN SLATED FOR IT. THE DECISION MAY HAVE BEEN MADE ONLY RECENTLY, THE STILL-CONTINUING DEBATE HAVING HELPED TO CLEAR THE WAY FOR IT; OR TENG MAY EVEN HAVE BEEN RESURRECTED LAST APRIL WITH HIS NEW ASSIGNMENT ALREADY IN MIND. IN EITHER CASE, THE REGIME HAS APPROACHED PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF HIS EVENTUAL ASSIGNMENT WITH GREAT CIRCUMSPECTION, PASSING TENG OVER FOR THE POLITBURO AT THE PARTY CONGRESS AND IT IS LIKELY THAT DISAGREEMENTS OVER GIVING HIM SUCH AN ASSIGNMENT, AND POLITBURO STANDING, FEATURED IN CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE POLITICAL CONTROVERSY AND STRUGGLE MOVEMENT WHICH BEGAN ON THE EVE OF THE PARTY CONGRESS. WITH HIS NEW STATUS TENG SUITS WELL THE IMAGE OF THE MINISTER RECALLED TO OFFICE FROM OBSCURITY, AN IMAGE POSITED FOR CRITICISM IN THE EARLY STATES OF THE ATTACK ON CONFUCIUS. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE RETURN OF THIS NUMBER TWO RANKING TARGET OF THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION IS ONE OF THE FACTORS BEHIND THE NASCENT SIGNS OF A NEW ANTI-RIGHTIST MOVEMENT NOW BEING WHIPPED UP. BUT NOW THAT THE REGIME HAS SURFACED TENG'S NEW STATUS, IT PRESUMABLY MEANS MAO AND CHOU BELIEVE ANY RESULTANT CONTROVERSY CAN BE CONTAINED WITHOUT UPSETTING THE BASIS FOR CURRENT POLICIES.

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